A Kaleidoscope of Harold Pinter's Plays

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Letters
and the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of Bilkent University
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in
English Language and Literature

by
Gül Kurtuluş
September 1992

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We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

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M.A. In English Literature
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September, 1992

Critics have tried to approach Pinter's plays from a variety of changing perspectives, which emerge as a result of the playwright's inventiveness. Pinter who aims at and achieves perhaps the most original innovations in dramatic form best exemplifies the range and diversity of the contemporary English drama. In consequence, he has created a distinctive personal style. Any attempt to make an exhaustive study of Harold Pinter at this stage would be futile; selection was inevitable. This dissertation will concentrate on eight plays by the playwright under discussion to demonstrate the refinement and development of his technique which was unprecedented and therefore shocked everybody in 1960s but is highly appreciated now.

Özet

Harold Pinter'ın Oyunlarındaki "Kaleydoskop"

Gül Kurtuluş
İngiliz Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans
Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hamit Çalışkan
Eylül 1992

Edebiyat eleştirmenleri Pinter'in oyunlarını incelerken çok farklı bakış açılarından yaklaşımlar sergilemişlerdir. Bu farklılık yazarın kendi üretkenliği sonucunda ortaya çıkmıştır. Tiyatro alanında daima yenilikler hedefleyen ve bu amaca başarıyla ulaşan Pinter, çağdaş İngiliz tiyatrosunun çeşitliliğini en güzel örnekleyen yazarlardan biridir. Yazar eserlerinde farklı kişisel tarzıyla karşımıza çıkar. Bu araştırmada Harold Pinter'ın yaratıcılığının en iyi şekilde sergilendiği oyunları seçilmeye çalışılmıştır. Araştırma, yazarın sekiz oyunu üzerinde yoğunlaşarak onun 1960larda seyircide şaşkınlık yaratan, ancak günümüzde beğeni toplayan oyun yazma tekniğindeki gelişim ve değişimi göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Harold Pinter is among the outstanding English dramatists of the twentieth century, and "although he is influenced by writers like Shakespeare, Albee, Beckett, Pirandello, Ionesco, Checkov, Joyce, Cary, Kafka, Celine, Dostoevski, Henry Miller and Hemingway" (1) he employs a unique dramatic technique which makes him a distinguished as well as a prolific writer. He started out by using the devices of the "comedies of menace", but eventually he continued to develop his dramatic technique and the outcome was uniquely his own. Starting from his first play The Room (which he wrote when he was twenty-seven) he has tried his hand at various kinds of plays, as he himself declared in an interview: "I felt that after The Homecoming, which was the last full-length play I wrote, I couldn't any longer stay in the room with this bunch of people who opened doors and came in and went out..." (2) It is not by coincidence that he changed his dramatic technique. He makes use of a theme in a set of plays and then moves on to another theme. Thematically a clear line of development can be traced in his writing career. At first he dealt with exposing the existence of menace and its impact on the individual, then he moved to the study of the origin of menace, and the characters' desperate attempts to fulfill their psychological needs. The portrayal of characters' desperate

struggle for emotional satisfaction has led him to his most recent subject, memory.

Criticism of Pinter's plays reflects the continuing change in his attitude: from the late fifties to the early sixties the critical treatment of his plays dwelt on the room-womb imagery which can be found in his three early plays: The Room, The Birthday Party, and The Dumb Waiter. These three plays share the common theme that the character inside a room is safe and comfortable, yet at the same time threatened by strangers from outside. In the late sixties attention was focused on the psychological aspects of Pinter's plays. For instance, in A Slight Ache (1959), The Caretaker (1960) and The Homecoming (1965) the threat comes from inside the characters themselves, unlike the previous plays in which the external menace and the effect of it on the individual are the main concern.

Recent discussions on Pinter's plays by critics like Enoch Brater, Bob Mayberry, and Leslie Kane have focused on the subject of memory and Pinter's use of language and silence. Pinter's ability to use language as a tool which makes his plays vivid and enjoyable is one of his most striking features. It is his use of language that makes the reader believe that s/he is solving a crossword puzzle while reading the play. Pinter is perhaps one of the most creative exponents among modern British dramatists of the potential of language, and he makes ample use of this in his plays.

It can be safely asserted that The Room, The Birthday

Party, The Dumb Waiter, A Slight Ache, The Caretaker, The Homecoming, Old Times and Betrayal are the most significant examples through which the above mentioned three basic critical approaches to Pinter's writing can be demonstrated: The Room and The Birthday Party take the room-womb imagery as their theme, and The Dumb Waiter exemplifies the theme of fear of the unknown; whereas A Slight Ache, The Caretaker and The Homecoming are the best representatives of the transitional period during which the menace is seen as an internal problem by the playwright; while Old Times and Betrayal concentrate on the subject of memory.

In the following chapters Pinter's thematic variety will be studied through a grouping of plays which signify the distinctive stages of his unique dramatic technique.

Chapter II

"The Comedies of Menace"

The kind of plays that Pinter wrote in the early sixties has been called "comedies of menace", which in its simplest sense suggests the existence of both menace and comedy. Pinter's use of language which embodies the full power of sudden intellectual pleasure through unexpected and/or unconnected accumulation of ideas or expressions make for comedy. Yet, there always exists some sense of menace, of threat to the security of the characters whether they are in or out of the room. The source of the threat appears to be both external and internal. Particularly in his later plays Pinter seems to suggest that the menace may also come from within the characters themselves. Parallel to the originality and variety in his technique and due to the characteristics of "comedies of menace" used in his plays Pinter receives an amalgam of comic and serious response from his readers. People sometimes laugh at the predicament of a character who mostly represents the everyday situation of a person by plunging into trifles. However, this situation can also be scaring as a result of an external or unknown menace.

Fear of an Outsider

Pinter's dramatic world consists of the inner and the outer worlds. The room is the place where the action takes place and the audience is informed about the outer world only through

the characters. The Room, apart from being the title of the first play, stands also for the common theme shared by The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter. It exemplifies the first phase of Pinter's writing which perceives the room as a secure, warm and comfortable place as opposed to the cold, dark and miserable outer world. Both the setting and the basic situation of this play seem to be very simple. Bert and Rose live safely in a room until they are threatened by a stranger -- a blind negro. The choice of the blind negro as the stranger is significant in the play, as he represents an outcast in society and becomes an overt symbol of darkness and the unknown.

The audience is not allowed to see the outer world which appears to Rose as a source of fear and menace: "It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder... Just now I looked out of the window. It was enough for me. There wasn't a soul about. Can you hear the wind?" (1) Furthermore, it seems that not only the outside but the other rooms of the house where they live are a source of fear:

> Still, the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement, anyway... I don't know how they live down there. It's asking for trouble. (I, 101)

The house itself is never fully shown but only referred to, although the stage directions indicate that it is a big house: (Scene: A room in a large house.) (I, 101). Rose believes that her room is the best compared to the rest of the rooms in

the house, particularly the basement:

> Rose: Who lives down there? I'll have to ask. I mean, you might as well know, Bert. But whoever it is, it can't be too cosy... I wouldn't like to live in that basement. (I, 102)

There is insecurity in the house, as well as in the room as no one seems to know the location of the house, nor who the landlord is. Consequently, uncertainty becomes the dominant element of the play. Mr Kidd who appears to be the landlord at the beginning turns out not to be the landlord of the house. When the Sands arrive, looking for the landlord they insist that the landlord is someone else. Rose is not sure of the place of her room within the building, and when she asks Mr Kidd how many floors there are in the house he fails to provide a satisfactory answer:

> Rose: How many floors you got in this house?
>
> Mr Kidd: Floors. (He laughs.) Ah, we had a good few of them in the old days.
>
> Rose: How many have you got now?
>
> Mr Kidd: Well, to tell the truth, I don't count them now. (I, 108)

Mr Kidd is also uncertain about his mother's origins: "I think my mum was a Jewess. Yes, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that she was a Jewess." (I, 109) This remark makes his origins vague as well. At another point he again seems to be uncertain about the presence of the rocking-chair in Rose's room:

> Mr Kidd: Eh, have I seen that before?

Rose: What?

Mr Kidd: That.

Rose: I don't know. Have you?

Mr Kidd: I seem to have some remembrance.

Rose: It's just an old rocking-chair...

Mr Kidd: I could swear blind I've seen that before... I wouldn't take an oath on it though. (I, 106-7)

This one-act play written within a few weeks embodies the basic theme of menace coming from outside, as Pinter himself stated: "Obviously they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room there is a world bearing upon them which is frightening. I am sure it is frightening to you and me as well. " (2) The menace comes from the intruder who brings the elements of uncertainty and unpredictability which make the whole process of intrusion threatening.

In The Birthday Party, the action is much more complex than that of The Room, but The Birthday Party being the first full-length play by Pinter, resembles the first play in the sense that the menace moves in from outside. The setting of the play is the living room of a lodging house in a seaside town where beds and breakfasts are offered to the visitors. The play opens with the couple -- Meg and Petey -- talking about Petey's job, the weather and the news which Petey read from the newspaper. It is not until Stanley appears to have his breakfast that there is any indication of his being Meg and Petey's lodger, and not their son. The conversation

between Meg and Petey suggests that he may be their son:

Meg: Is Stanley up yet?

Petey: I don't know. Is he?

Meg: I don't know. I haven't seen him down yet.

Petey: Well then, he can't be up.

Meg: Haven't you seen him down?

Petey: I've just come in.

Meg: He must be still asleep...

Petey: Didn't you take him up his cup of tea?

Meg: I always take him up his cup of tea. But that was a long time ago.

Petey: Did he drink it?

Meg: I made him. I stood there till he did. (I, 20-3)

The play embodies a kind of variety in its canvas. On a closer study it can be pointed out that many elements of the new drama are used in it. The use of non sequiturs, silences, the landlady-lodger relationship, which is also to be found in Orton's farcical Entertaining Mr Slone, similarly used here which turns out to be sexual as well as oedipal. Stanley who finds warmth and security in the house is being well-looked after by the couple, and he becomes more than a son and a lodger for Meg:

Meg: I'm going to call him. (She calls) Stan! Stanny! (She listens) Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you if you don't come down. I'm coming up! I'm going to count three. One! Two! Three! I'm coming to get you!

(Meg exits up the stairs. In a moment, shouts are heard off upstairs from Stanley and wild laughter from Meg. Petey rises and takes his plate to the hatch. More shouts and laughter are heard. Petey resumes his seat at the table. There is silence.

Meg re-enters down the stairs and stands in the hall doorway, panting and arranging her hair.) (I, 23-4)

The stage directions which indicate a kind of love relationship between Meg and Stanley together with Stanley's insistence on being the only visitor in that house give Meg and Petey's earlier banter a new gear. "Even the society gossip in the paper, from which Petey reads pieces of news that 'somebody's just had a baby', has to be seen in a new light" (4):

Meg: What is it?

Petey: (Studying the paper) Er - a girl.

Meg: Not a boy?

Petey: No.

Meg: Oh, what a shame. I'd be sorry. I'd much rather have a little boy.

Petey: A little girl is all right.

Meg: I'd much rather have a little boy. (I, 21)

Stanley is not Meg's little boy, but later at one moment she will be scolding him for not having his breakfast properly, at the next ruffling his hair, and fondling him which cause Stanley to "recoil in disgust" (I, 29).

With the arrival of the two men -- one Jew and the other

Irishman -- who come to the town and wish to stay at this boarding house, security disappears for Stanley. As in the two other plays -- The Room and The Dumb Waiter -- an irruption into the everyday life of a character is seen. For, what happens later, in The Birthday Party is that Stanley's resistance to the threatening advances of the two mysterious fellow-lodgers, namely Goldberg and McCann, is battered until he stammers into speechlessness at the end of the play. This time, however, the resistance of the character towards the menace coming from the agents of the outer world is not complicated by other outsiders, like Mr Kidd and the Sands (as in The Room) or like the mysterious envelope and the absurd food orders in The Dumb Waiter, but by Stanley's fellow inhabitants -- his landlady, her husband, and their neighbour Lulu. Within this three-act play the deck-chair attendant, the landlady, the lodger, the tart, the Irishman and the Jew are brought together to exemplify the theme of menace which comes from outside.

Stanley's birthday party, with its drum, its switching off the lights, its game of Blind Man's Buff adds to the uncertainty in the play. Meg announces that day to be Stanley's birthday, although Stanley rejects that idea. It could be Meg's idea in order to cheer Stanley up or Stanley may be wrong about the date:

Stanley: Anyway, this isn't my birthday.

McCann: No?

Stanley: No. It isn't till next month.

McCann: Not according to the lady.

Stanley: Her? She's crazy. Round the bend. (I, 51)

"Names are confused, identities shuffled" (5), irrelevant questions are asked sometimes serious, sometimes ridiculous which are all uttered rapidly:

Goldberg: Why did you change your name?

Stanley: I forgot the other one.

Goldberg: What is your name now?

Stanley: Joe Soap.

Goldberg: You stink of sin.

McCann: I can smell it.

Goldberg: Do you recognize an external force?

Stanley: What?

Goldberg: Do you recognize an external force?

McCann: That's the question!

Goldberg: Do you recognize an external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?

Stanley: It's late.

Goldberg: Late! Late enough! When did you last pray?

McCann: He's sweating...

Goldberg: Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

Stanley: He wanted to - he wanted to - he wanted to...

McCann: He doesn't know which came first.

Goldberg: Which came first?

McCann: Chicken? Egg? Which came first?

Goldberg: He doesn't know. (I, 60-1)

The physical and the verbal menace that is tangible but undefinable lack a clear origin. Uncertainty continues to be the dominant element as the action moves towards its climax. An unnamed organization is mentioned by the intruders which makes every interpretation possible at once: criminal, political, religious...

McCann: Why did you leave the organization?

Goldberg: What would your mum say, Webber?

McCann: Why did you betray us? (I, 58)

It can be argued that Pinter is "the dramatist of nameless fear" (3), a reputation which he owes partly to his being the son of a Jewish tailor, and living in Hackney (a working-class district of London's East End). Unlike the dramatists writing during the 1960s and 70s, (e.g. John Osborne and Arnold Wesker) he was not interested in politics; but behind the highly private world of his plays there exist characters who are obsessed with the use and abuse of power, the fight for a place to live, cruelty and terror.

Living in the nineteen-thirties as a Jewish Londoner, Pinter had a distinct social identity as part of a dominant community. His background mirrors the source of fear and menace, cruelty and terror in his plays. The East End of London where Pinter grew up as a child of the nineteen-thirties was a political battle-field. Large Jewish populations enlarged by

new arrivals after the First World War and later, the victims of Hitler were struggling for a livelihood among Cockneys, Negroes and Irishmen. This unrest did not settle down even after the Second World War.

There can be little doubt that Pinter's radical pacifism which led him to risk a prison sentence at the age of eighteen rather than do his national service was a reaction to his experience of violence during his boyhood and adolescence. Thus, a strong and acute sense of fear dominates his plays. He experienced a kind of homeless and unknown fear in a non-Jewish society as a Jew. This homeless and unknown fear, expectation and suspense are the elements used to create an atmosphere in Pinter's plays. Pinter has a highly developed ability to create suspense by the use of momentary conflicts through words and action. "The tension that is experienced by the audience is the same with the tightrope walkers in the circus" (6). The suspense emerges from the question: will he fall or will he keep his balance?

It can be said that the genesis of some of Pinter's plays depends largely upon his biographical background. Stanley's wish to stay in Meg and Petey's house, Rose's resistance to not to go out of her room, the undefinable menace of Ben and Gus, Davies' desire to take refuge with Mick and Aston can all be explained by Pinter's Jewish background. Going through the acute experience of being a minority among an established majority Pinter records the sarcastic position of the people,

their fears and dreams very strongly, as Ronald Knowles points out in his book The Birthday Party and The Caretaker: Text and Performance:

> Within the world of a familiar neighbourhood were those who might, by anything from sarcasm to direct violence, revile Jewishness as foreign and alien. Security and insecurity were side by side. Just outside warmth, care and friendship lay insinuation, abuse and mockery... To be Jewish in such circumstances was to be conscious of oneself as socially identified and identifiable, and of one's unique individual self, an indefinable subjectivity which fostered detachment and acute observation, the groundwork of art. (7)

Pinter's defenseless victims in The Room, The Dumb Waiter and The Birthday Party are a middle-aged wife, a man who asks many questions and a man who presents himself as an ex-pianist. These characters can be found in ordinary life, among ordinary people. They utter words which can be heard everyday and it is this quality which makes his drama remain on the firm ground of everyday reality. Pinter's characters are taken from every level of society, from very poor to rich, from middle class couples to outcasts, tramps, prostitutes or pimps. However, Pinter never clearly defines and deals with the social class of his characters in his plays. The problem of identity, of verification, of accuracy, in short to be able to become acceptable, organic and inseparable part of society dominate his plays.

The Birthday Party contains the elements mentioned above as

well as the typical elements of Pinter's unique style which he frequently uses in his plays: dialogue disturbed by silences and misunderstandings, the room as a symbol of the womb, the theme of the intruder and the defenseless victim who has a problem of identity and security. Stanley who is incapable of leading an independent life outside, looks for what Meg can offer: a safe house which becomes his haven that protects him from the outside world. Stanley's inability to leave the house, to take the responsibility of living alone and to find a place to go on his own, without a substitute mother or a tart ends up by his being taken away by two intruders -- Goldberg and McCann. Although at one moment he determines to leave the house he is discouraged by Lulu to whom he offers to be together in a new environment:

> Stanley: (abruptly) How would you like to go away with me?
>
> Lulu: Where?
>
> Stanley: Nowhere. Still, we could go.
>
> Lulu: But where could we go?
>
> Stanley: Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.
>
> Lulu: We might as well stay here.
>
> Stanley: No. It's no good here.
>
> Lulu: Well, where else is there?
>
> Stanley: Nowhere. (I, 36)

Being neglected by Meg who diverts all her interest to the newcomers and who forgets everything while organising the "birthday party", and being refused by Lulu who rejects his

proposal to leave the house with him and who flirts with Goldberg, Stanley tries to suffocate Meg and rape Lulu during the game of Blind Man's Buff played at the party. His own birthday party is contaminated with violence and force. In spite of his last efforts Stanley is defeated at the end of the tournament. His glasses are broken by Goldberg and McCann. The violence at the end of The Room where Bert "strikes the Negro, knocking him down, and then kicks his head against the gas-stove several times" (I, 126) is outstripped by the symbolism of Rose's blindness, whereas in The Birthday Party the ending is an amalgam of the comic and the threatening which set the audience to a variety of reponses. The birthday party which proves to be a real terror for Stanley seems to be a game for Meg, and unable to see what is going on around her she doesn't even recognize Stanley being tortured and taken away by her new tenants. Her last words, which mark the end of the play, clearly show her dullness:

> Meg: Wasn't it a lovely party last night?
>
> Petey: I wasn't there.
>
> Meg: Weren't you?
>
> Petey: I came in afterwards.
>
> Meg: Oh. (She pauses) It was a lovely party. I haven't laughed so much for years. We had dancing and singing. And games. You should have been there.
>
> Petey: It was good, eh?
>
> (There is a pause)

Meg: I was the belle of the ball.

Petey: Were you?

Meg: Oh yes. They all said I was.

Petey: I bet you were, too.

Meg: Oh, it's true. I was. (She pauses) I know I was.

Curtain. (I, 97)

Fear of the Unknown

Pinter's second one-act play The Dumb Waiter makes use of similar elements of uncertainty, unpredictability and mystery. The play was regarded as funny by the audience when it was first performed at the Hampstead Theatre Club in 1960 though John Russell Taylor stated in Anger and After that "a friend who saw its first production, in German at the Frankfurt Municipal Theatre, assures [me] that then it was played as a completely serious horror piece without a flicker of amusement." (8)

The couple this time consists of two men, who turn out to be hired killers. The uncertainty emerges just at the beginning of the play as they do not know whom they are working for, why they are killing some people, even who is to be killed. The play begins with Ben lying on a bed, reading the newspaper and Gus removing a flattened matchbox and a cigarette packet from his shoes, as the stage directions indicate. When Gus describes their job it becomes obvious that this is the only thing that they know about what they are doing: "I mean, you come into a place when it's still dark, you come into a room you've never

seen before, you sleep all day, you do your job and then you go away in the night again." (I, 134)

During the course of the short play Gus asks many questions and they chat about casual things, sometimes quarrel over football matches and tea until an envelope filled with matches mysteriously slides under the door. Through questions, quarrels and the mysterious envelope, menace seeps into the room and the characters become aware of the insecurity of their position. Upon the discovery of the matches, Gus takes a revolver under the pillow which establishes menace concretely.

While they are quarrelling about whether to say "light the kettle" or "light the gas", in a fierce and comic way their uneasiness increases when a serving hatch begins to move up and down. At first they try to answer the absurd orders of food -- two braised steaks and chips, two sago puddings, two teas without sugar -- (I, 147) immediately, yet inadequately. Whatever they have in their bags are loaded onto the hatch and sent up. Although the order itself is quite explicit there are no signs who sent it down and why. Still greater and increasingly exotic food orders are returned: "Macaroni Pastitsio, Ormitha Macarounada." (I, 152) When the first note descends "Ben levels his revolver" (I, 148) which marks the increasing discomfort among the couple. The interesting juxtaposition of the comic and the threatening gives way to Pinter's ability to create a special kind of suspense to which Walter Kerr refers in his book Harold Pinter:

> Pinter earns his special suspense by constructing his plays in such a way that we are forced to enter this state of mind in the theatre. When we watch Macbeth grow fearful, even to the point of hallucination, we can make a clear and objective judgement about his fear: he feels as he does because he is guilty of having killed Duncan. We are linking an observed effect to a known cause. We are not undefinably disturbed. (9)

The audience may find the characters' humble reaction funny in their insufficiency in providing food and in their undefined terror. Discovering a speaking-tube Ben sends a message above:

> Good evening. I'm sorry to - bother you, but we just thought we'd better let you know that we haven't got anything left. We sent up all we had. There's no more food down here. (I, 155)

Only after some time passes they begin to question the strangeness of their condition. It is again Gus who asks questions and regrets to be there as well as what he has done:

> We send him up all we have got and he's not satisfied. No, honest, it's enough to make the cat laugh. Why did you send him up all that stuff? (Thoughtfully) Why did I send him up? (I, 157)

Unable to find an answer to his questions, at another point, he becomes curious about identity of the person who sends orders from upstairs and asks further questions, which point out the unpredictability of their situation as well as the fear of the

unknown:

Gus: Ben. Why did he send us matches if he knew there was no gas?

(Ben looks up.)

Why did he do that?

Ben: Who?

Gus: Who sent us those matches?

Ben: What are you talking about?

(Gus stares down at him)

Gus: (Thickly) Who is it upstairs? (I, 161)

Unlike The Room and The Birthday Party, in The Dumb Waiter not a stranger or strangers enter the room, but through the envelope, the dumbwaiter and the speaking-tube menace intrudes into the lives of the two characters. The final part of the play resembles the beginning: Ben lies down with his newspaper, Gus leaves the room and at that moment Ben receives another order from upstairs to kill the first person who appears at the door, and it turns out to be Gus. This time the room becomes a trap for the characters, not a refuge.

In this play, as in the two previous plays -- The Room and The Birthday Party -- anxiety lacks a clear origin and therefore it lacks a clear ending. Ben and Gus are engulfed in anxiety from the beginning till the end without having the simplest idea about whom they are working for, why they are doing such a job, who sends all those absurd orders of food and why, how the speaking tube and the hatch start working, etc. Pinter shows these

people's helplessness in the face of evil or danger without an adequate ground. Environment becomes a source of fear for the characters who are anxious about everything. Yet, the characters' sudden verbal and physical reactions make for comedy.

Chapter III

The Internalised Problems of Menace

A Slight Ache which is the first radio play written after "the unsatisfactory reception of The Birthday Party by the audience in 1958" (1), strikes the reader as being different from the stage plays discussed so far. Pinter makes a significant change by using the outside as a setting and allowing the audience to see the outer world, unlike in the previous plays -- The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter -- where the room is the only place where the action takes place and the audience is informed about the outer world only through the characters.

The play, originally written for the radio, opens with a breakfast scene. The stage directions indicate that the two chairs and the table laid for breakfast "will later be removed and the action will be focused on the scullery on the right and the study on the left." (I, 169) Instead of a single room, the action takes place at two different places in this one-act play, and what is more, "a large well kept garden is suggested at the back of the stage with flower beds, trimmed hedges, etc." (I, 169) The final note in the first stage direction of the play has great importance, since the outsider, who is a blind matchseller this time, stands at the garden gate.

Flora and Edward, the two speaking characters of the play become aware of this mysterious outsider who stands by their

garden gate from seven in the morning till late at night without ever leaving his spot and selling a single box of matches. The blind matchseller is taken into the house by Flora and Edward who feel disturbed and bothered by his presence. Once in, they project onto him their desires and fears, and thus he serves as a mirror reflecting their own personal inadequacies and dissatisfactions. Flora's desires are sexual and maternal -- typical elements shared by Pinter's most women characters -- which can also be seen in Rose of The Room, Meg of The Birthday Party, Emma of Betrayal and Ruth of The Homecoming. These women characters see themselves responsible for the men around them as mothers as well as lovers, and keep interfering with their lives. Goldberg's comment on Meg in The Birthday Party best summarizes the common characteristics found in Pinter's most women characters: "A good woman. A charming woman. My mother was the same. My wife was identical." (I, 81)

Flora who is another example of mother/lover figure is attracted to the old, blind matchseller and she projects all her dreams onto him. At first she rejects the idea of inviting him in, and resembles him to a bullock while she and Edward are talking about him before he comes in:

> Good Lord, what's that? Is that a bullock let loose? No. It's the matchseller! My goodness, you can see him... through the hedge. He looks bigger. Have you been watching him? He looks like a bullock. (I, 177)

She even offers to call the police and have him removed, but

later volunteers to talk to him alone:

> Edward! Listen to me! I can find out all about him, I promise you. I shall go and have a word with him now. I shall... get to the bottom of it... You'll see- he won't bargain for me. I'll surprise him. He'll... he'll admit everything. (I, 189)

After questioning him about his ideas on women and sex, at the end of her monologue she decides that he has been standing at their gate waiting for her:

> (She kneels at his feet. Whispering.) It's me you were waiting for, wasn't it? You've been standing waiting for me. You've seen me in the woods, picking daisies, in my apron, my pretty daisy apron, and you came and stood, poor creature, at my gate, till death do us part. (I, 192-193)

She takes the matchseller into her life, as the attributes of a prostitute suggest and throws her husband out. Thus, for Flora the matchseller whom she christens as Barnabas becomes the husband she has dreamed of, and the child she can take care of. Giving a name to the old man makes Flora consider herself to be the owner of the man, and thus superior to her husband. This conviction becomes clear in Flora's own words: "My husband would never have guessed your name. Never." (I, 192)

Edward, on the other hand, fears that the matchseller is a remnant from his past. Perhaps he stands for all the inadequacies that Edward feels in himself.

In A Slight Ache the menace is completely passive and the

real disruptive force exists in the mind of the insider, namely Edward. There is no violence in the play at all. The theme of intrusion into a person's private world, his room, and the importance of the entrance of the intruder which can be clearly found in such plays as The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter are absent in this play. The outsider who remains entirely silent throughout the play causes neither verbal nor physical threat for the insiders. From the silent, pathetic old man Edward receives no answers, and he feels annoyed about being unable to discover the stranger's identity. His obsession of trying to pinpoint information about the matchseller who stands inert and silent evokes a desire to find out the essence of his personality in Edward. Although he denies that he is not threatened by the appearance of this non-committal figure he is, and he goes out to get some fresh air:

> You look a trifle warm. Why don't you take off your balaclava?... I say, can I ask you a personal question? I don't want to seem inquisitive but aren't you rather on the wrong road for matchselling?... Do forgive me peering but is that a glass eye you're wearing?... Tell me, between ourselves, are those boxes full, or are there just a few half-empty ones among them?... Now listen, let me be quite frank with you, shall I? I really cannot understand why you don't sit down? There are four chairs at your disposal... I can't possibly talk to you unless you're settled... Do you follow me? You're not being terribly helpful... You may

think I was alarmed by the look of you. You would be quite mistaken. I was not alarmed by the look of you. I did not find you at all alarming. No, no. Nothing outside this room has ever alarmed me. You disgusted me, quite forcibly, if you want to know the truth... (Muttering) I must get some air. I must get a breath of air. (I, 185-7)

The disturbing silence of the matchseller leads to Edward's increasing articulateness and eventual disintegration. As if challenged by the stillness of the old man Edward tells him his life story. The inactivity of the blind matchseller, on the other hand reveals Edward's hidden fears and weaknesses. Edward who is confronted with his inner emptiness and weaknesses starts behaving pretentiously and snobbishly. Verbally he attacks his wife and in the end he disintegrates unlike Flora who projects her vital sexuality onto the newcomer.

Flora: The man is desperately ill!

Edward: Ill? You lying slut. Get back to your trough!

Flora: Edward...

Edward (violently): To your trough! (I, 193)

Flora obeys her husband's wish and immediately leaves him alone with the matchseller, but at another point she stays totally indifferent to what he says, and she seems to care little about his fears. Furthermore, she suddenly confronts him with the truth. By consciously ignoring Edward's expectances and fears she disturbs him with her words:

Flora: Really Edward. You've never spoken to me like that in

all your life.

Edward: Yes, I have.

Flora: Oh, Weddie. Beddie, Weddie...

Edward: Do not call me that!

Flora: Your eyes are bloodshot.

Edward: Damn it.

Flora: It's too dark in here to peer...

Edward: Damn.

Flora: It's so bright outside.

Edward: Damn.

Flora: And it's dark in here.

(Pause)

Edward: Christ blast it!

Flora: You're frightened of him.

Edward: I'm not.

Flora: You're frightened of a poor old man. Why?

Edward: I am not!

Flora: He's a poor, harmless old man.

Edward: Aaah my eyes.

Flora: Let me bathe them.

Edward: Keep away. (I, 178)

Edward feels a slight ache in his eyes. His gradual perception of his weakness, his ailment, and Flora's deliberate misunderstanding of her husband's feelings cause Edward's downfall. However, he continues to deny that his eyes are becoming worse as well as his health:

You're weeping. You're shaking with grief. For me. I can't believe it. For my plight. I've been wrong... (Briskly) Come, come stop it. Be a man. Blow your nose for goodness sake. Pull yourself together. (He sneezes.) Ah. (He rises. Sneeze) Ah. Fever. Excuse me. (He blows his nose.) I've caught a cold. A germ. In my eyes. It was this morning. In my eyes. My eyes... Not that I had any difficulty in seeing you, no, no, it was not so much my sight, my sight is excellent - in winter I run about with nothing on but a pair of polo shorts - no, it was not so much any deficiency in my sight as the airs between me and my object -don't weep- the change of the air, the currents obtaining in the space between me and my object. (I, 198)

Edward's incessant questioning without ever hearing a word from the matchseller is followed by his memories of his success as "number one sprinter at Howells" (I, 199) during his school years. Finally his last words in the play formulate his dilemma which comes just before his downfall: "(With great, final effort - a whisper) Who are you?" (I, 199) After this unanswered question Edward totally collapses. His breakdown, his loss of confidence and disintegration go parallel with the matchseller's awakening. The matchseller's role becomes dominant, he stands up and goes over to Flora, whereas Edward's upright posture tumbles.

The situation of The Caretaker resembles A Slight Ache, where the action takes place in the room but no outside menace

intrudes. The outsider is again invited in by the couple, this time two brothers: Mick and Aston.

Aston, who is seen as an introvert in The Caretaker brings a stranger, Davies, to the place where he lives with his brother Mick. It seems that this is the first time since his experience at the mental home that Aston develops an interest towards someone apart from his unusual habit of collecting materials which have turned their room to a junk shop. Aston has an intention of building a shed, and that's why he collects materials as he himself declares to Davies:

> Davies: ([Davies] observes the planks) You building something?
>
> Aston: I might build a shed out the back...
>
> Davies: Carpentry, eh?
>
> Aston: (standing still) I like... working with my hands. (II, 15)

The explanation of Aston's withdrawn attitude can be the electrical shock treatment he has received in a mental home two years ago. Aston openly tells about his experience:

> ...Then one day they took me to a hospital ... They asked me questions in there. Got me in and asked me all sorts of questions... Well, that night I tried to escape, that night. I spent five hours sawing at one of the bars on the window in this ward... And they caught me, anyway. About a week later they started to come round and do this thing to the brain... They used to come round with these...I don't know

what they were... they looked like big pincers, with wires on, the wires were attached to a little machine. It was electric. They used to hold the man down, and this chief... the chief doctor, used to fit the pincers, something like earphones, he used to fit them on either side of the man's skull. There was a man holding the machine, you see...(II, 53-4)

Towards the end of the second act, there remains almost nothing unknown about Aston and his brother Mick. At first Aston seems to be the owner of the room, but later it is understood that Mick owns it:

Mick: How do you like my room?

Davies: Your room?

Mick: Yes. (II, 29-30)

Davies, on the other hand is a vague character whose name, origins, job and future plans are rather obscure. He insists that he has his papers at Sidcup, he has an assumed name and he will go to Sidcup as soon as the weather breaks:

Davies: (With great feeling) If only the weather would break! Then I'd would be able to get down to Sidcup!... I got my papers there!... Bernard Jenkins. That's my name. That's the name I'm known , anyway...

Aston: What's your real name, then?

Davies: Davies. Mac Davies. That was before I changed my name... If only I could get down to Sidcup! I've been waiting for the weather to break. He's got my papers, this

man I left them with, it's got it all down there, I could prove everything. (II, 17-8)

He asserts that he could prove everything, but treats his birth and his origins as something too difficult to remember:

Aston: You Welsh?

Davies: Well, I been around, you know... what I mean... I been about...

Aston: Where were you born then?

Davies: (darkly) What do you mean?

Aston: Where were you born?

Davies: I was... uh...oh, it's a bit hard, like, to set your mind back... see what I mean... going back...a good way... lose a bit of track, like you know... (II, 23)

No matter how unsuccessful Davies is in Aston's gentle quiz about his past, Aston likes him. On the other hand, Mick who comes later to the stage finds Davies looking around the room, and being the owner of the room feels disturbed about Davies' existence. As opposed to Aston's pitiful feelings towards the homeless old tramp, Mick does not kindly accept a stranger in the flat. After a verbal and physical attack he offers Davies the job of a caretaker.

Davies who is brought to that house by Aston, and who is provided with everything he needs turns his back on Aston and rejects the idea that Aston is his friend. In order to flatter Mick he even goes so far as to call Aston mad:

Davies: He's no friend of mine.

Mick: You're living in the same room with him, en't you?

Davies: He's is no friend of mine. You don't know where you are with him. I mean, with a bloke like you, you know where you are. (II, 59)

Aston's honest declaration of his experience at the mental home makes Davies change alliances completely. This time he tries to convince Mick, with whom he is going to redecorate the room, that he has got plenty of references at Sidcup. Still the same pretext of the weather goes on:

Mick: So we can always get hold of these references if we want them.

Davies: I'll be down there any day, I tell you. I was going down today, but I'm... I'm waiting for the weather to break. (II, 49)

In order to be on the same side with Mick whom he now sees as straightforward and trustworthy he provokes Mick against his brother. He forces Mick to talk to and explain Aston that they will decorate the room together, while he himself threatens him with being locked up in the nuthouse again:

Your brother's got his eye on you! They can put the pincers on your head again, man!... Any time. All they got to do is get the word. They'd carry you in there, boy. They'd come here and pick you up and carry you in! They'd keep you fixed. (II, 65)

Aston's calm reaction to this, as ever, surprises Davies. He suggests that Davies should pack up his stuff and leave the place

at once. Davies goes to Mick in order to obtain some helping force, but things do not come out as Davies wishes them to be. He finds a brick wall in front of him, instead of a warm welcome. Mick calls him an impostor and a troublemaker. In a way Davies' mask is slid off:

> Mick: What a strange man you are. Aren't you? You're really strange. Ever since you come into this house there's been nothing but trouble. Honest. I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. Look at it. You come here recommending yourself as an interior decorator, whereupon I take you on, and what happens? You make a long speech about all the references you've got down at Sidcup, and what happens? I haven't noticed you go down to Sidcup to obtain them. It is all most regrettable but it looks as though I'm compelled to pay you off for your caretaking work. Here's half a dollar. (II, 71-2)

This enlightening summary about Davies leads to Davies' last attempts to come to terms with Aston once more which turn out to be futile. Aston decisively turns down Davies' offer to help him to build his shed: "No, I can get it up myself." (II,

75) Rejected by both brothers, Davies experiences solitude, homelessness and rootlessness. He plays his trump card making apologies, offering compromises, in short fighting for his life:

> But... but... look... listen... listen here...I mean... What am I going to do?... What shall I do?... Where am I going to go?...If you want me to go...I'll go. Just say the word.
>
> (Aston remains still, his back to him, at the window.)
>
> Listen... if I ... got down ... if I was to ... get my papers... would you ... would you let...would you...if I got down...and got my...
>
> (Long silence)
>
> Curtain. (II. 76)

Pinter chooses a long silence to end the play which is one of the characteristics of his writing. This enables the reader to make a conclusion of his/her own. However, it can be said that The Caretaker is much more clear and direct than the earlier plays by Pinter: The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter. Only Davies is subject to unpredictability, whose life is built on pretense, and again only with Davies, the problem of verification emerges. It is not obvious whether he really has his papers at Sidcup, or whether his real name is Davies or Jenkins.

With a slight difference both The Caretaker and A Slight Ache deal with the portrayal of man's self-destructiveness. The origin of menace can be found in the characters, not outside. Davies who is the newcomer in The Caretaker prepares his

predicament himself by trying to provoke the two brothers against each other, whereas Edward who is the insider in A Slight Ache invites the stranger into his own house and thus as a result of his weakness the stability in the couple's life is destroyed. Davies leads himself into destruction while trying to destroy Aston, who has always been open with Davies. When the two brothers decide that he should be expelled, he keeps on voicing his demand for security, without ever realizing that the more he tries to make his way into the room, the more he asserts his own expulsion.

The Homecoming which is Pinter's third full-length play is in some ways different from A Slight Ache and The Caretaker, though it shares the theme of menace which comes from inside the character. In The Homecoming as the title suggests a number of encounters and adjustments take place; but what makes the play different from the other two is that Pinter makes it possible for the characters to come and go in pairs, in groups or individually to the stage. For the first time various places of entry -- from the road, the garden, the kitchen and the other bedrooms -- onto the stage are used.

The story-line goes parallel with the stage directions, but Teddy who comes back home with his wife after six years, leaves at the end for his other home in America, whereas Ruth literally arrives at a new home; Joey wishes Ruth to stay with them, just like Lenny who is the first to welcome Ruth, and Max falls on to his knees and begs Ruth to kiss him who receives

her as a prostitute at the beginning:

> Max: Who asked you to bring dirty tarts into this house?
>
> Teddy: Listen don't be silly - ...
>
> Max: We've had a smelly scrubber in my house all night. We've had a stinking pox-ridden slut in my house all night... (III, 49)

Sam, on the other hand seems to realise the truth too late. Finally he sees that he has no place among these brutish men and leaves them not to come back again. Thus, the characters' inner worlds are revealed and a new family, this time without Teddy and Sam, is established and the members of this new family gather around Ruth:

> Teddy goes, shuts the front door.
>
> Silence.
>
> The three men stand.
>
> Ruth sits relaxed on her chair.
>
> Sam lies still.
>
> Joey walks slowly across the room.
>
> He kneels at her chair.
>
> She touches his head lightly.
>
> He puts his head on her lap.
>
> Max begins to move above them, backwards and forwards.
>
> Lenny stands still...
>
> [Max] He begins to groan, cluthes his stick, falls on to his knees by the side of her chair. His body sags... He looks at her still kneeling...

She continues to touch Joey's head, lightly.

Lenny stands, watching.

Curtain. (III, 89-90)

This time Pinter brings together an unpleasant group of an old butcher, a boxer, a pimp and a cab-driver. The brutal vitality of the family which consists of Max (the father), Lenny and Joey (the two sons), and Sam (the uncle) is clearly established in the first scene. Max's domination of the all-male household is evident throughout the play. The play opens with his demand to know what Lenny has done with the scissors. With his old cardigan, cap and stick which he attempts to use on Lenny he represents the more isolated and least pleasant of them all. He does the cooking, cleaning and takes care of Lenny, Joey and Sam who he compares to animals:

> Who do you think I am, your mother? Eh? Honest. They walk in here every time of the day and night like bloody animals. (III, 24)

Although he blames them for acting like animals he treats them like animals as Lenny points out in his speech:

> I want to ask you something. The dinner we had before, what was the name of it? What do you call it?... Why don't you buy a dog? You are a dog cook. Honest. You think you're cooking for a lot of dogs. (III, 18-19)

Max's ideas about women whether they are mothers or wives are also outrageous. He makes clear that any woman brought into the house by any of them will be regarded as their possession to

which Sam rejects:

> Max: When you find the right girl, Sam, let your family know, don't forget, we'll give you a number one send-off, I promise you. You can bring her to live here, she can keep us all happy. We'd take it in turns to give her a walk round the park.
>
> Sam: I wouldn't bring her here.
>
> Max: Sam, it's your decision. You're welcome to bring your bride here, to the place where you live, or on the other hand you can take a suite at the Dorchester. It's entirely up to you. (III, 23)

His feelings towards Jessie -- his ex-wife -- are a strange blend of admiration and hatred which reminds of his treatment of Ruth:

> Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway. (III, 17)

Max also persistently teases Sam, about his job, who never thinks of giving up working in spite of his lady customers who mess up on the back seat. After hearing Sam's boastful utterances about himself, -- that he is the best chauffeur in the firm -- Max insults him for not having a wife.

> Sam: After all, I'm experienced. I was driving a dust cart at the age of nineteen. Then I was in long-distance haulage. I had ten years as taxi-driver and I've had five as a

private chauffeur.

Max: It' funny you never got married, isn't it? A man with all your gifts... Isn't it? A man like you? (III, 22)

Sam tries to cope with Max in verbal play but is defeated in the end by Max who despises him upon his declaration about Jessie:

Sam: After all, I escorted her once or twice, didn't I? Drove her round once or twice in my cab. She was a charming woman... All the same , she was your wife. But still... they were some of the most delightful evenings I've ever had. Used to just drive her about. It was my pleasure. (III, 24)

Lenny, too is always ready for a row with his father. He tells his father to shut up, calls him a "daft prat" and courageously warns him not to talk to Lenny in that tone of voice:

Lenny: I am going out. I'm going out to buy myself a proper dinner.

Max: Well, get out! What are you waiting for?

Lenny looks at him.

Lenny: What did you say?

Max: I said shove off out of it, that's what I said.

Lenny: You'll go before me, Dad, if you talk to me in that tone of voice. (III, 19)

On the other hand, unlike Lenny and Sam, Joey who comes from boxing lessons refrains from engaging in verbal play with his father. He prefers to go upstairs to his room instead of staying with the others and becoming a target for Max's insults:

"Joey looks around for his jacket, picks it up, goes out of the room and up the stairs." (III, 26)

Into this household Teddy and Ruth arrive in the middle of the night without having informed the family. Teddy represents an outcast who is a professor of philosophy at an American University. He tries to calm down Ruth who is a little nervous as this is the first time she is meeting Teddy's family:

> Teddy: (Gently) Look, it's all right, really. I'm here. I mean... I'm with you. There's no need to be nervous. Are you nervous?
>
> Ruth: No.
>
> Teddy: There's no need to be... They're very warm people, really. Very warm. They're my family. They're not ogres. (III, 31)

To be sure, Teddy is mistaken. As it turns out, he receives an unfriendly welcome first from Lenny, then his father and the other brother who regard him as an outsider; whereas Ruth fits into the household quite well establishing her domination on Max, Joey and Lenny. Although Teddy makes his attempt to join them by his homecoming, he is incapable of being a part of the family. He refuses to dispute with Lenny who wants to discuss Christian theology:

> Lenny: Eh, Teddy, you haven't told us much about your Doctorship of Philosophy. What do you teach?
>
> Teddy: Philosophy.
>
> Lenny: Well, I want to ask you something. Do you detect a

certain logical incoherence in the central affirmations of Christian theism?

Teddy: That question doesn't fall within my province. (III,59)

Teddy is regarded as an outsider in the family, not because he is detached, but because he detaches himself. His detachment from this unlikable crew is partly understandable, however his emotional blankness is no more likable than the members of the family. It seems a matter of little importance to Teddy that he is unable to be a part of the family. Teddy's sterile condition eventually degenerates into self-destruction.

Teddy: You wouldn't understand my works. You wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about. You wouldn't appreciate the points of reference. You're way behind. All of you. There's no point in my sending you my works. You'd be lost. It's nothing to do with the question of intelligence. It's a way of being able to look at the world. It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things. I mean it's a question of your capacity to ally the two, to relate the two, to balance the two. To see, to be able to see! I'm the one who can see. That's why I can write my critical works. Might do you good... have a look at them... see how certain people can view... things... how certain people can maintain... intellectual equilibrium. Intellectual equilibrium. You're just objects. You just move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the

same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being... I won't be lost in it. (III, 69-70)

His motto "to operate on things and not in things" crumbles before the brutal vitality of the family who accept Ruth as a new member. Teddy's arrogant manners, both verbal and physical, draw no sympathy and his vain attempts to convince Ruth to go back to their home in America are rejected by Ruth who prefers to be like Jessie. Thus, it can be said that Teddy's aversion paves the way for Ruth's involvement in the family's affairs. Ruth first meets Lenny in the household who tries to seduce her. At first, she remains indifferent to his verbal attacks and provocation, but gradually dominates him behaving like a mother:

> Have a sip. Go on. Have a sip from my glass... Sit on my lap. Take a long cool sip...Put your head back and open your mouth. (III, 42)

Later on, Ruth's acceptance without causing much trouble to take up a life of a prostitute does not come as a shock as she makes it quite clear that before Teddy met and married her she was "a photographic model for the body". (III, 65) "The country house she excitingly recalls as the scene used for her posing by the lake sounds like a place to pass enjoyable time rather than a place to work". (2) Ruth's remarks about her life before she had her children together with Max's immediate recognition of her as a tart makes the idea possible that she does not like the life of a college professor's wife. She describes America as full of rock, sand and insects:

It's all rock. And sand. It streches... so far... everywhere you look. And there's lots of insects there. (III, 61)

Her speech forebodes the dullness of her married life, which makes her previous life desirable. Thus, effortlessly and immediately she asserts her superiority over the members of the family who often mention the difficulty of lacking a mother. Ruth's having three sons, just like Jessie seems to be no coincidence. Due to her own choice she becomes an easily available partner both for Lenny and Joey and the intelligent college professor who prefers "to operate on things" has nothing to do or say. Max's violent reaction upon his first confrontation with Ruth undergoes a total change as by now he is completely convinced of the resemblance of Ruth and Jessie:

Mind you, she's a lovely girl. A beautiful woman. And a mother too. A mother of three. You've made a happy woman out of her. (III, 67-8)

Teddy does not fit into this strange gathering of men as Lenny informs him that during his absence, in spite of their busy life, Joey, Sam and Lenny can "make up a unit" (III, 73) and sit at the backyard. There is always an empty chair in the circle which is supposed to be Teddy's. However, Teddy cannot occupy this empty place the way his family expects him to do. His affirmative answer to his brother's questions after a short silence is rather questionable as the outcome is just the opposite of what he as well as the family anticipate:

Lenny: ... And so when you at length return to us, we do

expect a bit of grace, a bit of je ne sais quoi, a bit of liberality of spirit, to reassure us. We do expect that. But do we get it? Have we got it? Is that what you've given us?

Pause.

Teddy: Yes. (III, 73)

Ruth's final advice "Eddie. Don't become a stranger" (III, 88) before Teddy leaves does not find its rightful place as Teddy has already been a stranger.

The Homecoming is not about Ruth's victimization, yet it seems that as far as two people are concerned victimization does exist. Sam persistently tries to survive in spite of Max's insults, whereas Teddy unsuccessfully tries to come together with his old family in spite of the big emotional gap in him.

As in the two previous plays: A Slight Ache and The Caretaker no outside menace is seen in The Homecoming. Unlike the first plays: The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter where the menace comes from outside and destroys the comfort and the security of the insider the later plays, namely A Slight Ache, The Caretaker and The Homecoming deal with the characters' psychological fulfillment of their needs. Yet, all of these plays can be seen as similar in the sense that uncertainty and unpredictability continue to be the dominant factors in them. Pinter moves on to the theme of the menace coming from inside the characters themselves. He deals with the characters' attempts to fulfill their psychological needs in A Slight Ache The Caretaker and The Homecoming. However, in these three plays Edward, Davies

and Teddy fail in their attempts, and the reason can only be found in themselves.

Chapter IV

The Subject of Memory

Pinter's later plays which form the third stage of his writing career belong to another area of concern. As far as subject matter and technique are concerned, these plays mark a conspicuous change in Pinter's dramatic world. This time, the playwright introduces the themes of recapturing and recreating the past. Nostalgia, dreams and memories constitute the characters' lives. The past appears as an aspect of the present and it plays an important role in shaping or reshaping the present or the future. Definitely it affects the present, but this does not mean that there exists only one acceptable past within the play. The past is what the characters need or want it to be in a present situation.

Anna says in Old Times "There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place." (IV, 27-8) Memory is as much a part of reality as the actual events. Old Times is based on three different versions of memories by three characters. Anna, Kate and Deeley are involved in a kind of memory contest and till the end of the play they try to impose their memories on one another. The ending which reveals Kate as the winner comes as a surprise as Anna and Deeley, the two dominant rivals of the game struggle for her. The memories that they recall point to the incongruity among the

three, yet they all emphasize the truth of their own. The competition between Anna and Deeley is centered around two memory-fantasies, the first concerning a film called Odd Man Out and the other a party in Westbourne Grove. Both remember these incidents in different ways which can be best seen in juxtaposition:

> Deeley: What happened to me was this. I popped into a fleapit to see Odd Man Out. Some bloody awful summer afternoon, walking in no direction...Anyway, there was the bicycle shop and there was this fleapit showing Odd Man Out and there were two usherettes standing in the foyer... And there was only one other person in the cinema, one other person in the whole of the whole cinema, and there she is. (IV, 25-6)
>
> Anna:Don't tell me you've forgotten our days at the Tate?... For example, I remember one Sunday she said to me, looking up from the paper, come quick, quick, come with me quickly, and we seized our handbags and went, on a bus, to some totally obscure, some totally unfamiliar district and, almost alone, saw a wonderful film called Odd Man Out. (IV, 34)

Both react to the experience of seeing Kate and being with her in the cinema differently, denying the presence of the other, although Anna and Deeley may both have been present as Deeley talks about two usherettes -- one of whom was most probably Anna -- and Anna states that they were "almost alone".

The idea of creating the past independently in accordance with one's own wishes becomes dominant in the play, and this is merely done to control the future lives of the people around. Actually what happened in the past is of little importance; what is happening on the stage is what matters. Thus, the competitors' performance in this hot debate has great value. Deeley's and Anna's different interpretations of the party in Westbourne Grove add to their power struggle.

> Anna: You're saying we've met before?
>
> Deeley: Of course we've met before. We've talked before. In that pub, for example. In the corner. Luke didn't like it much but we ignored him. Later we all went to a party. Someone's flat, somewhere in Westbourne Grove. You sat on a very low sofa, I sat opposite and looked up your skirt. (IV, 46-7)
>
> Anna: I had borrowed some of her underwear, to go to a party. Later that night I confessed. It was naughty of me. She stared at me, nonplussed, perhaps, is the word. But I told her that in fact I had been punished for my sin, for a man at the party had spent the whole evening looking up my skirt. (IV, 61)

In Old Times and Betrayal which we can call the memory plays, Pinter depicts the inner world of the characters who reminisce about their past, in an inactive atmosphere. Unlike the previous plays discussed in Chapters II and III, in these two plays the inner and outer worlds seem to have little importance.

Gradually the threats of the outside world, the internal menace the origin of which can be found in the characters themselves, in other words the potential menace created by the external and internal forces disappear. The characters carry on their lives remembering their past days filled with references to cafes, bars, films, parties, parks and all kinds of social activities.

Pinter seems to follow the Bergsonian concept of time which states that "reality is change, change is indivisible, and in an indivisible change the past is one with the present". (1) In order to convey both the past and the present in the theatre at the same time, Pinter makes use of some cinematic devices, in Old Times and Betrayal. Flashbacks, lights, old songs, even the sitting and the standing positions of the characters are used which furnish these plays with the capability of the rapid camera movement of a cinematic film, as Pinter points out while explaining the main difference between his work as a writer for films and for the stage:

> I don't work in purely verbal terms on the stage, by any means. I feel that the way an actor is sitting or standing is much to the point. But if there are other people on stage, you have to focus in quite a subtle way, actually. The discipline is very different. In film you select the image. (2)

Old Times is full of fine examples of such cinematic devices. The play opens with three figures in a dim light. One of them "slumped" in an armchair, the other "curled" on a sofa, and

the third stands at the window, looking out. Later, lights gradually brighten on Kate and Deeley while Anna stays in dim light at the window. Kate's first word "Dark" which starts the play answers Deeley's question which the audience is not allowed to hear. With this first word the past is invoked and as Kate tries to answer Deeley's further questions about her flatmate with whom she lived in London twenty years ago, the haziness of the past slowly disappears. At the same time the audience begins to see Anna clearly as she comes out from shadows. There seems to be a sudden flashback as she starts to talk about the old days, the minute she turns from the window and becomes involved in the conversation:

> Queuing all night, the rain, do you remember? my goodness, the Albert Hall, Covent Garden, what did we eat? to look back, half the night, to do things we loved, we were young then of course... (IV, 13)

Through such accumulation of memories Anna and Deeley in a way fight over Kate.

The past is sometimes evoked by the help of an old song remembered as a word uttered reminds the characters of the title of that song. In such scenes Deeley and Anna sing together, yet without forgetting their aim of possessing Kate. Both of them use language as a weapon of defence or attack. Although this usage of language by them seems to be less dominant in this play than by Rose in The Room, Ben and Gus in The Dumb Waiter, Stanley in The Birthday Party, Edward in A Slight Ache, Davies in The Caretaker

and Max in The Homecoming, they certainly have capacity for the verbal attacks which Anna and Deeley use to keep their heads above water in the memory contest:

Anna: (Singing) The way you hold your knife -

Deeley: (Singing) The way we danced till three -

Anna: (Singing) The way you have changed my life -

Deeley: No, no, they can't take that away from me.

Kate sits on a divan.

Anna: (To Deeley) Doesn't she look beautiful?

Deeley: Doesn't she? (IV, 54-5)

Kate who speaks occasionally throughout the play is given an opportunity by Pinter to speak at length at the end of the play. Her speech is startlingly significant as it marks the end of the memory contest between Anna and Deeley as well as the resolution of the play. By drying herself up after the bath, Kate puts an end to Anna's and Deeley's indecisiveness about who is to dry Kate up. She voices her decision by calling Deeley dirty, and Anna dirty and at the same time dead:

Kate: (To Anna) But I remember you. I remember you dead... I remember you lying dead. You didn't know I was watching you. I leaned over you. Your face was dirty. You lay dead, your face scrawled with dirt, all kinds of earnest inscriptions, but unblotted, so that they had run, all over your face, down to your throat... When I brought him into the room your body of course had gone... He lay there in your bed. He looked up at me with great expectation... I dug about in

the windowbox, where you had planted our pretty pansies, scooped, filled the bowl, and plastered his face with dirt. He was bemused, aghast, resisted, resisted with force. He would not let me dirty his face, or smudge it, he wouldn't let me. (IV, 67-9)

The image of dirt used by Kate who takes long times over her bath, "who luxuriates in it and who gives herself a great soaping all over" (IV, 49) is a powerful one. Her declaration is followed by Deeley's sobbing and Anna's lying down on her divan with prolonged silence. The play ends with Deeley slumped in an armchair, Anna lying on her divan and Kate sitting on the other divan, in full light. Pinter has again achieved a theatrical effect by the use of silences, the position of the characters and the bright light which puts a sharp focus on them.

Betrayal which is a play "about a nine-year old relationship between two men who are best friends" (3), and a woman as Pinter defines it, is quite different from Old Times. Pinter reverses the chronology of events and the story itself deserves as much attention as how it develops and how Pinter manipulates the problem of giving backward movements in the theatre. As in Old Times Pinter adapts certain cinematic devices in Betrayal. The play opens in the present, however, with Emma's words that serve as dramatic preparation, remembrance of the past begins in the first scene:

Emma: I thought of you the other day.

Jerry: Good God. Why?

She laughs.

Jerry: Why?

Emma: Well, it's nice sometimes, to think back. Isn't it? (IV, 162-63)

The arrangement of the scenes going backward -- with the exceptions of the second, sixth and seventh scenes -- provides a suitable ground for the events to unfold in. Each character's confrontation with betrayal comes at a different point. Robert learns about his wife's affair with his friend Jerry by coincidence when he gets Jerry's letter at American Express where he goes to cash some travellers cheques:

> To be honest, I was amazed that they suggested I take it. It could never happen in England. But these Italians...so free and easy. I mean, just because my name is Downs and your name is Downs doesn't mean that we're the Mr and Mrs Downs that they, in their laughing Mediterranean way, assume we are. We could be, and in fact are vastly more likely to be, total strangers. So let's say I, whom they laughingly assume to be your husband, had taken the letter, having declared myself to be your husband but in truth being a total stranger, and opened it, and read it, out of nothing more than idle curiosity, and then thrown it in a canal, you would never have received it and would have been deprived of your legal right to open your mail, and all this because of Venetian je m'en foutisme. I've a good mind to write the Doge of Venice about it. (IV, 222)

Putting emphasis on the verbal statements Pinter makes the reader believe that s/he is solving a crossword puzzle. Unlike Old Times the characters in this play are not eager to talk about the past, thus they do not attempt to recapture or recreate it. "In Betrayal the past speaks for itself", (4) which enables the reader to have objective evidence and make judgments for him/herself.

The stage directions which indicate the time and the place of the scene as well as the visual possibilities of the stage such as pieces of furniture make the transitions between nine short scenes clear and smooth. In this way needless, long explanations are eliminated. Pinter continues this economy of words in the parts where the characters talk. The play consists of short, seemingly simple sentences. However, each word deserves to be thought carefully. Through such carefully chosen words Pinter conveys the interesting betrayal between two men and a woman. In the play everyone seems to be betraying each other. Emma betrays both her husband and her lover, Robert betrays both his wife and his friend, whereas Jerry betrays his wife, his friend and his lover. Yet, none of these incidents is revealed openly. The complex feelings shared by Emma, Robert and Jerry are never clearly declared. The reader must be alert to the implications of the characters' utterances in order to understand their actual meaning. In the seventh scene, Robert, while keeping up a casual conversation about the modern novel with Jerry, subtly suggests his awareness of the love affair between his wife

and his best friend:

> Robert: She seemed to be madly in love with it.
>
> Jerry: Good.
>
> Robert: You like it yourself, do you?
>
> Jerry: I do...
>
> Robert: You know what you and Emma have in common? You love literature. I mean you love modern prose literature. I mean you love the new novel by the new Casey or Spinks. It gives you both a thrill. (IV, 252-54)

Also, the relationship between Jerry and Robert becomes obvious through implications. Emma's confession of her affair with Jerry is followed by Robert's words which reveal his true feelings towards Jerry: "I have always liked Jerry. To be honest, I've always liked him rather more than I've liked you. Maybe I should have had an affair with him myself." (IV, 229) At another point he again implies a very special relationship between him and Jerry who wishes to be alone in a game of squash without the presence of another woman around:

> Well, to be brutally honest, we wouldn't actually want a woman around, would we Jerry? I mean a game of squash isn't simply a game of squash, it's rather more than that. You see, first there is the game. And then there is the shower. And then there is the pint. And then there's lunch... You don't actually want a woman within a mile of the place, any of the places really. You don't want her in the squash court, you don't want her in the shower, or the pub, or the

restaurant. (IV, 213-14)

Like this one, the relationship between Casey and Emma is also only suggested:

Jerry: Anyway, what is all this about you and Casey?

Emma: What do you mean?

Jerry: What's going on?

Emma: We have the occasional drink.

Jerry: I thought you didn't admire his work.

Emma: I've changed. Or his work has changed. Are you jealous? (IV, 173-74)

In "Writing for the Theatre" Pinter states that "There are twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement, depending on where you're standing at the time or on what the weather's like. A categorical statement, [I find], will never stay where it is and be finite. It will immediately be subject to modification by the other twenty-three possibilities of it." (5) Therefore, Pinter never explicitly defines the motives of his characters. He continues in the same article that he has "mixed feelings about words." (6) He does not trust language as he finds it "a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken" (7) which means beneath the words uttered there are always other levels of truth. In relation to this he believes that while we are talking "most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of these attributes that a language arises". (8) Thus, the inconsequential everyday

language can be observed in Pinter's plays. According to Pinter characters "possess a momentum of their own" (9), therefore he refuses "to impose upon them, [not] to subject them to a false articulation, [by which I mean] forcing a character to speak where he could not speak, making him speak in a way he could not speak, or making him speak of what he could never speak." (10)

His ideas about reality are as interesting as his ideas about language: "there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false." (11) Hence, reality and illusion can well co-exist without having clear differences between them, the examples of which can be found in Old Times and Betrayal. The validity of the memories recalled by Anna and Deeley in the memory contest is open to discussion in Old Times as both of them insist on seeing Kate as an extention of their recreated memories. Whereas, in Betrayal through implications and gestures the truth about the characters' motives and desires is shown, yet without any concrete basis. The fourth scene where for the first time all three characters come together ends with the highly emotional reaction of Emma in her husband's arms, after her lover has left. It's not clear whether she cries as she feels disturbed about betraying her husband or as she realises the implications of the relationship between her husband and her lover:

> Robert and Jerry leave.
>
> She remains still.
>
> Robert returns. He kisses her. She responds. She breaks

away, puts her head on his shoulder, cries quietly. He holds her. (IV, 215)

Pinter sustains a highly respectful relationship between himself as an author and his characters as well as between himself and the readers. His dramatic style shows that he successfully achieves a balance, where an "image can freely engender image" (12) and where at the same time the reader can have his/her sights when the characters are silent or even when they are talking or acting.

Pinter's recent plays (e.g. Old Times and Betrayal) take memory as their theme, yet they belong to an even more fundamental concern than that of the plays which are discussed in Chapters II and III. It is because the emphasis is now put on how the individual is responsible for recapturing the past and recreating the present, by the playwright. Anna and Deeley's desperate struggle to possess Kate is based on the memories they recall or recreate, in Old Times. The play presents a battle fought over the affections of a woman by her husband and best friend, in which bits of remembrances are used as weapons. In Betrayal, on the other hand, the reader learns about the past as the events gradually unfold scene after scene. The play starts where it ends and one cannot attach more importance to how the story develops than the story itself; since the strange relationship between a woman and two men make the whole thing interesting about this trio. Tracing the hidden meaning beneath almost every single word, the reader becomes aware of the

characters' infidelities.

Chapter V

Conclusion

When Pinter started to write plays or to formulate his ideas, he was concerned with the existence of menace that comes from the agents of the outer world, which disturbs the comfort and security of the individual inside the room. He takes as his starting point man's confrontation with himself and society in which the nature of man has an ultimate importance. He presents his characters at the extreme edge of their living, that is when they are confronted with the crisis of adjustment to themselves, which proceeds their confrontation with society.

His concern was not an abstract notion of man or a surreal fantasy, but the concrete experience of being a man. That is why, through his characters he tries to convey the human beings' basic awareness of the threat which comes both from inside and outside. From the examination of the external menace , which he deals with in the "comedies of menace" Pinter moved to the theme of the internalised problems of menace, which exemplifies the characters' weaknesses. This theme is succeeded by his recent subject memory, which is another step in his thematic variation.

Pinter's writing career is marked by a dynamic quality which emerges as a result of his creativity in the themes he uses. First he dealt with exposing the existence of menace which intrudes into the everyday life of a character and the impact of it on the individual who finds comfort and security in a room. To

this group belong The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter. These three plays share the common theme which exemplifies the first stage of Pinter's writing. Then comes the second phase in which the threat comes no more from outside, but from inside the characters themselves. As a result of their weaknesses, the characters fail in their attempts to fulfill their psychological needs the examples of which can be traced in A Sight Ache, The Caretaker and The Homecoming. Finally, Pinter moves on to the subject of memory. Old Times and Betrayal are the best representatives of this period in which Pinter perceives memory as an important factor. Memories dominate these plays in which the characters' ideas and actions are directed according to memories. The above mentioned three groups of plays best demonstrate Pinter's thematic progress as well as his unique dramatic technique.

As far as Pinter's dramatic technique is concerned, he is very successful at creating characters from all levels of society and presenting them with vivid inventiveness. An enormous number of techniques can be observed in Pinter's writing. Although he makes use of some methods which may seem akin to those used by other well known dramatists such as Albee, Beckett, Ionesco, Henry Miller, he is far from being repetitive. Apart from his definition and usage of silences, and the theme of the external and internal menace, the precision, economy and control which Pinter exercises over the language of his dialogue, together with his good commend and ear for speech patterns make Pinter one of

the major forces in the Contemporary British Theatre.

Every single element in his plays -- from creating characters and making them alive within a theme to the usage of silences -- is the outcome of the playwright's artistic vision, together with his knowledge and employment of stage stratagems. "Every single dot, dash, pause or silence serve a particular purpose" (1). Pinter's plays have a concrete basis as he states in "Writing for the Theatre":

> I have usually begun a play in quite a simple manner; found a couple of characters in a particular context, thrown them together and listened to what they said, keeping my nose to the ground. The context has always been, for me, concrete and particular, and the characters concrete also. I've never started a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory and never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way or, in other words, as allegorical representations of any particular force, whatever that may mean. (2)

When a Pinter play is studied thoroughly, the characters, the world they live in and the language they speak seem to be taken from everyday life, which make his plays stand on the firm ground of everyday reality. Yet, in some of the plays such as The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter ambiguity and uncertainty occupy considerable amount of place. There is always another level or other levels of truth in what the characters say or do which Pinter deliberately establishes in his plays. For

him, truth and untruth can exist at the same time.

Pinter presents his characters in trifling situations in order to make his readers view the hidden meaning beneath the words, silences, gestures and personalities. However, while doing this he directs the reader to come to a conclusion, free from the impact of any image or allegorical representation. The conclusion, on the other hand should never be easy as he refuses to accept anything as definite or final. Such qualities which make Pinter's writing unique and each play a new experience for the reader, prove that Pinter has reached his rightful place in the dramatic world. And, "as long as he continues his pattern of development, he can only gain in stature" (3).

Notes

I. Introduction

1 Harold Bloom, gen. ed. Twentieth-Century British Literature, 6 vols. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 4: 2251.

2 Bloom, Twentieth-Century 2251.

II. "The Comedies of Menace"

1 All references to the texts of The Room, The Birthday Party, The Dumb Waiter, A Slight Ache, The Caretaker, The Homecoming, Old Times and Betrayal are in Plays: One, Harold Pinter (London: Methuen, 1983), and

Pinter, Plays: Two (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

Pinter, Plays: Three (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

Pinter,Plays: Four (London: Faber and Faber, 1991).

2 Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (England: Penguin Books, 1987) 235.

3 Gülsen Okay, introduction, "Reality and Illusion in Modern British Drama: John Osborne, John Whiting, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter," diss., Hacettepe U, 1969, XXIII.

4 Bloom, Twentieth-Century 2253.

5 Harold Bloom, ed. Modern Critical Views: Harold Pinter (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 20.

6 Okay, XXV.

7 Ronald Knowles, The Birthday Party and The Caretaker: Text and Performance (London: Macmillan,1988) 9.

8 John Russell Taylor, Anger & After: A Guide to the New British Drama (London: Methuen,1983) 329.

9 Bloom, Twentieth-Century 2255.

III. **The Internalised Problems of Menace**

1 Taylor, 331.

2 A. E. Dyson, ed. Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker and The Homecoming (Houndmills; Macmillan, 1986) 174.

IV. **The Subject of Memory**

1 Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, Harold Pinter (London: Methuen, 1983) 85.

2 Bloom, Modern 116.

3 Elizabeth Sakellaridou, Pinter's Female Portraits (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1988) 186.

4 Bloom, Modern 111.

5 Harold Pinter, introduction, Plays: One, by Harold Pinter (London: Methuen, 1983) 9.

6 Pinter, 13.

7 Pinter, 13.

8 Pinter, 13-4.

9 Pinter, 14.

10 Pinter, 14.

11 Pinter, 11.

12 Pinter, 12.

V. **Conclusion**

1 Sakellaridou, 7.

2 Pinter, 10-1.

3 Bloom, Twentieth-Century 2251.

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